

**State University of New York at Oswego  
Conflict of Interest and Professional Ethics Policy**

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The State University of New York at Oswego strives for the highest standards of academic and professional integrity. Academic excellence demands good faith and diligence in all phases of one's work and includes impartiality in hiring, evaluation and promotion. Yet at any college or university, especially one in a small city or town, potential conflicts of interest are frequent. College employees often have spouses, relatives or consensual partners who are also affiliated with the college or seek to be and many college employees have interests outside of the college that may conflict with their positions at the college. Other ethical breaches can easily arise as well. This document clarifies current rules and provides new procedures to prevent conflicts of interest and to adjudicate reported conflicts fairly, supporting the rights of everyone involved.

**Specifically**, this policy document does the following:

- Cites the state ethics laws that govern College employees;
- Cites the College's policy regarding the hiring of relatives and clarifies and extends it to include the hiring, promotion and evaluation of relatives, spouses and consensual partners;
- Sets out one's obligation to report a potential conflict of interest;
- Sets out the procedures for reporting a potential conflict of interest;
- Provides a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form (Attachment);
- Provides examples of violations of the ethical standards listed in the Code of Ethics (Appendix).

**NEW YORK STATE PUBLIC OFFICERS LAW: CODE OF ETHICS**

College faculty, administrators and professional staff are required, at the time of their appointment, to sign an Oath of Office pledging that they have read and will conform to the New York State Public Officers Law sections 73 through 78, relating to ethics in state government. The bedrock of the SUNY-Oswego Conflict of Interest and Professional Ethics Policy is Section 74, "Code of ethics." Section 74 is reproduced in the Faculty and Staff Handbook under "General Policies," and in the appendix at the end of this document, along with examples of breaches of each of these standards in a university context.

**DECISIONS INVOLVING RELATIVES, SPOUSES AND CONSENSUAL PARTNERS**

A particularly troublesome conflict of interest may arise when members of the college community are related or engaged in consensual relationships (Non-consensual relationships are already prohibited under the College's sexual harassment policy and are not covered by this policy). The College's Recruitment and Employment of Relatives policy (in Section 2 of the Faculty and Staff Handbook) has two principal anti-nepotism principles. First, the person requesting the appointment of an employee's relative must assure supervisory personnel that a thorough search has been made for a qualified candidate. Second, no employee shall, at any time, be a party to any official decision that affects a relative, and violation of this policy shall automatically invalidate the decision.

"Be a party to" is defined to mean attempt to influence, including but not limited to, being present at any deliberations or presenting evidence in the matter.

The term "relative" under this policy is hereby defined as the state Public Officers Law (Section 73-a(f)) defines it, to include the employee's spouse as well as a child, parent, stepchild, stepparent, or any direct descendant of the grandparents of the employee or the employee's spouse.